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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM : AmEmbassy Baghdad

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DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

March 12, 1956

DATE

REF : Embassy despatch no. 713, dated March 6, 1956

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION NEA-4	DEPT. I N F O	REC'D 3-22	OTHER CIA-7 ARMY-4 COM-10 IN-7
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SUBJECT: Iranian Ambassador's Comments re Iraqi-Iranian Frontier Water Dispute

Referring to the recent Iraqi parliamentary interpellation anent the Iraqi-Iranian water dispute near Qasr al-Shirin and to Foreign Minister Burhanuddin BASHAYAN's reply (see reference despatch), Iranian Ambassador Husain GHODS-NAKHAI has told us privately that he feels that at least some Iraqis are making much more of the affair than it warrants. He has repeatedly told Bashayan, he said, that the Government of Iran is willing to come to any equitable division of waters of the al-Wand stream or, for that matter, of any other riparian stream on the Iraqi-Iranian frontier as well. The Iranian Consul at Khanaqin had reported, however, that two-thirds of the flow of the al-Wand is at present being wasted in Iraq. Iran, he emphasized, does have use for this water and can see no reason why it should not use it as long as it continues to be wasted on the Iraqi side of the border. The solution to the problem, he felt, is that some fair and reasonable division of waters be arrived at and soon.

He then again related that he had discussed the whole question of outstanding Iraqi-Iranian frontier problems with Bashayan on numerous occasions in the past year or more. He had, in fact, been under the impression when leaving Baghdad last August for two months of leave that plans were well underway to set up a joint Iraqi-Iranian committee at an early date to consider overall frontier problems between the two countries (Embassy despatch no. 517, dated January 10, 1956, and previous). Upon his return, however, he had found the situation in this regard absolutely static. Nothing whatsoever had been done. Bashayan had attributed this inactivity to his, the Ambassador's, absence. No one else at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad, he had insisted, was sufficiently acquainted with the details of the problem to be able to discuss it meaningfully with the Iraqi authorities. Ghods-Nakhai says this is not true.

The Ambassador is now seeking to revive the project of discussing overall frontier problems, but admits that he is making only slow headway. He hopes to be given some help on the matter at the forthcoming Baghdad Pact Ministerial Council meeting in Tehran (April 16), when, he believes, Iranian Prime Minister Husain ALA will again raise the subject with Prime Minister Nuri al-SAID.

COMMENT:

There are two principal reasons, in the Embassy's view, for the slow progress to date. These few Iraqi officials, first of all, who, in as highly centralized a

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governmental structure as is the Iraqi, could perhaps act in the matter, have been far too preoccupied with other more immediate problems in recent months to give much time and thought to the subject of Iraqi-Iranian frontier talks. Secondly, the fact of the matter is that the Government of Iraq is not overly anxious to hold overall frontier talks with Iran -- especially since, as appears already to have been decided (see Embassy's despatch no. 641, dated June 20, 1955), its position on the Shatt al-Arab aspect of the problem may be expected to be fairly rigid. Iraqi-Iranian frontier matters, as a result, are usually given a low priority and handled, wherever possible, on an ad hoc basis.

For the Ambassador:


Hermann Frederick Everts,
Second Secretary of Embassy

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